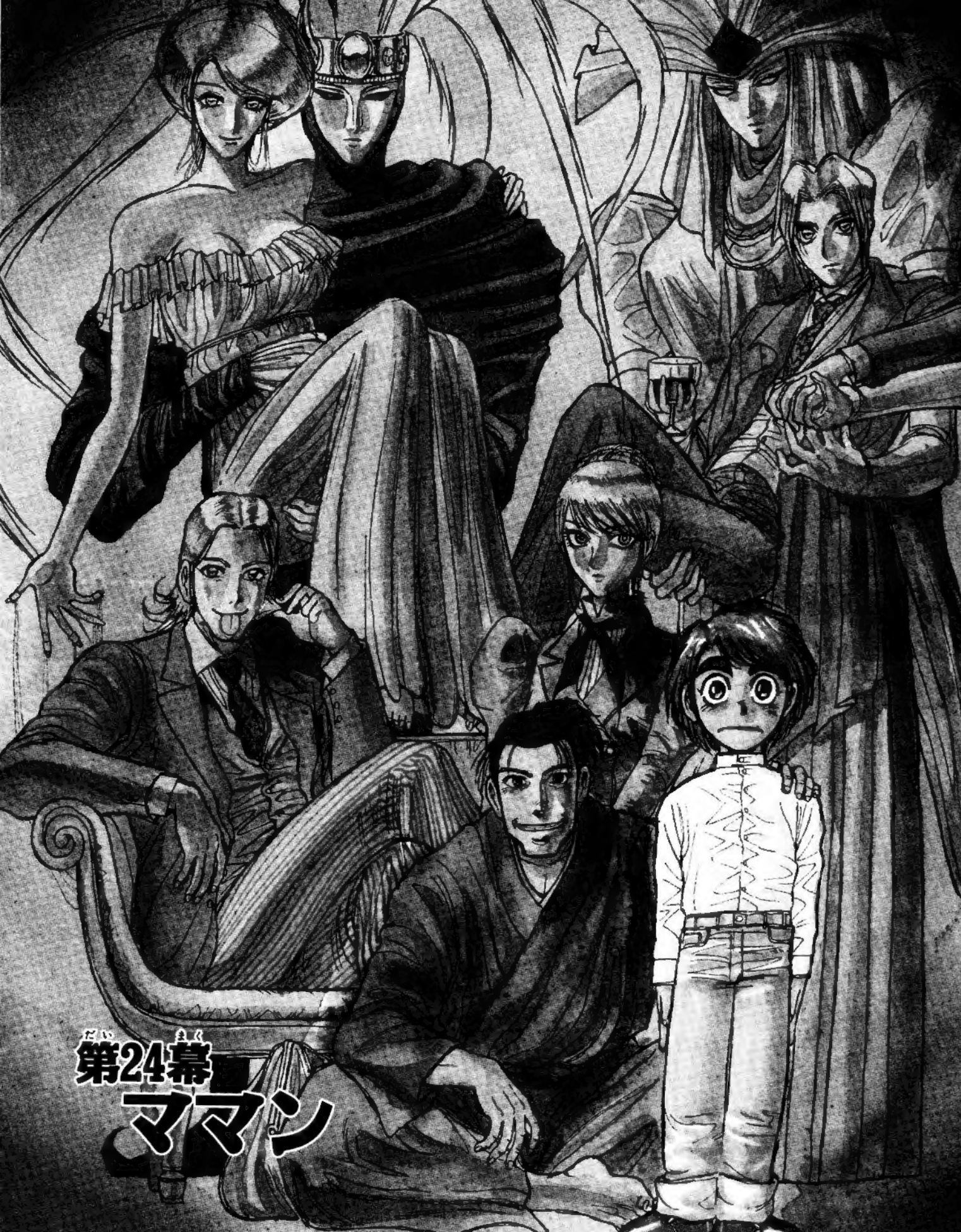
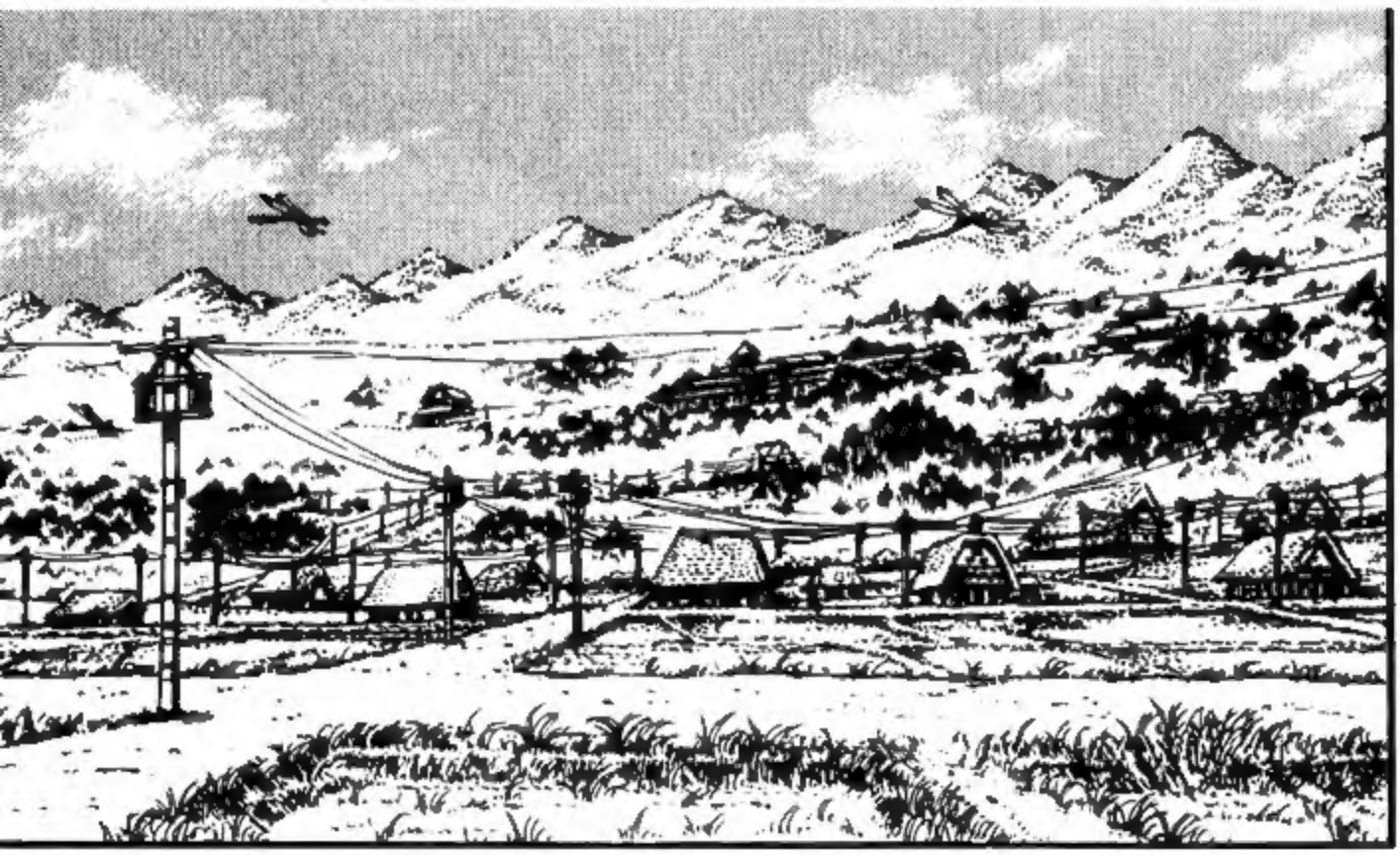
91 YEARS AGO, IN THE PERIOD YOU CALL THE MEIJI ERA...
I CAME TO KUROGA VILLAGE.
THE JOB I HAD BEEN GIVEN ...
WAS TO REMOVE THE SOFT STONE FROM ANGELINA'S BODY, AND TRANSFER IT INTO THE CHILD SHE HAD CONCEIVED.

ACT 24 MAMAN

AS YOU MAY IMAGINE...
SHE WAS NOT ABOUT TO LET THAT HAPPEN.


第24幕
ママン



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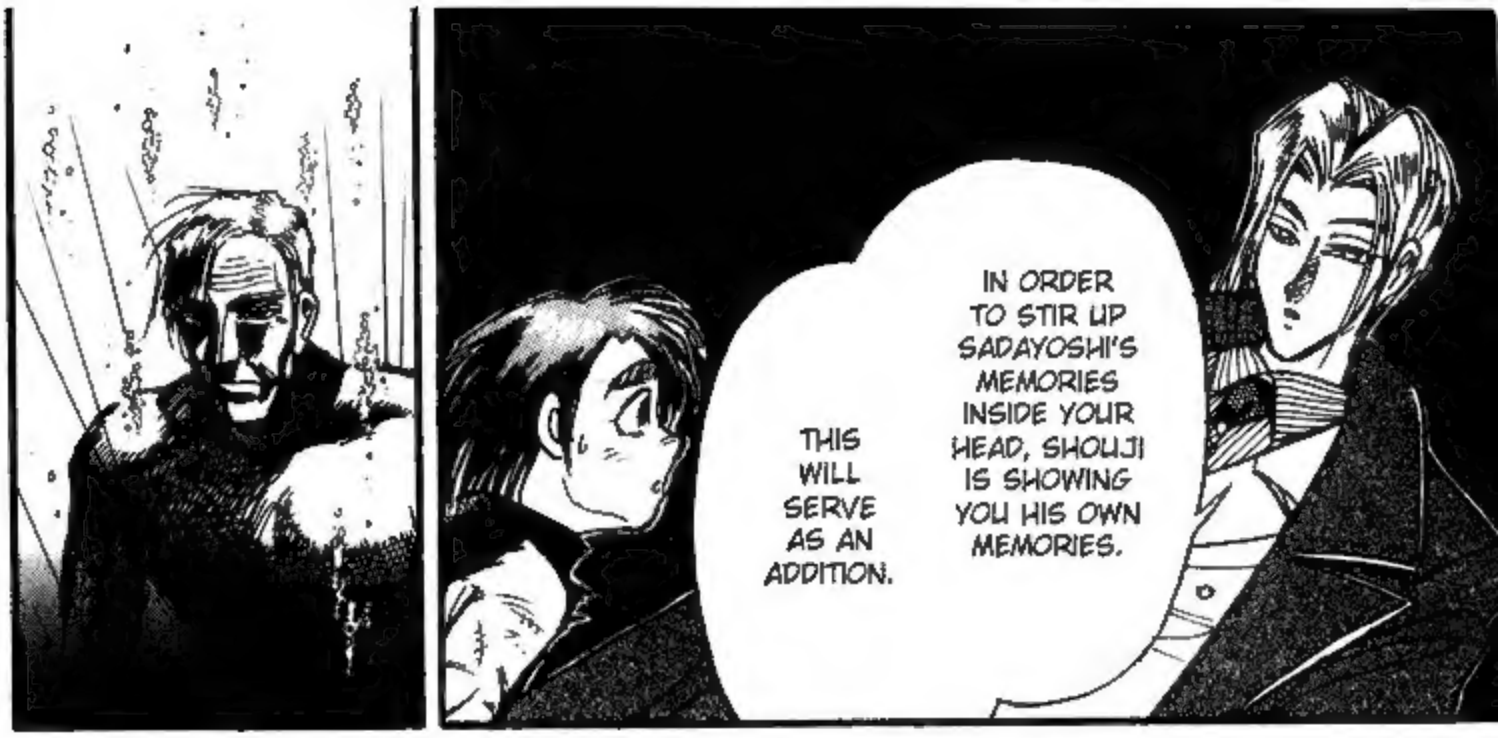
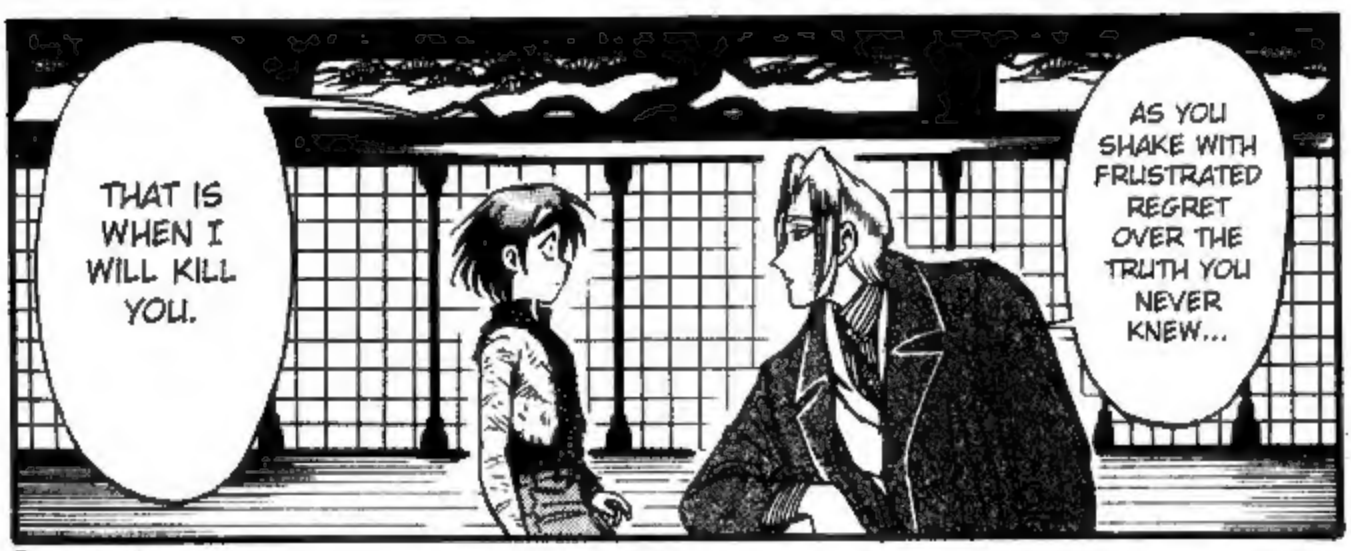

IN ORDER TO STIR UP SADAYOSHI'S MEMORIES INSIDE YOUR HEAD, SHOUJI IS SHOWING YOU HIS OWN MEMORIES.
THIS WILL SERVE AS AN ADDITION.

I WONDER, WILL YOU KEEP ON CLINGING TO THE NAME *MASARU* ONCE YOU HAVE LEARNED EVERYTHING... **SADAYOSHI?**
HUH?
AND SOMEONE WHOM YOU KNOW VERY WELL IS CLOSELY INVOLVED WITH THIS MEMORY.

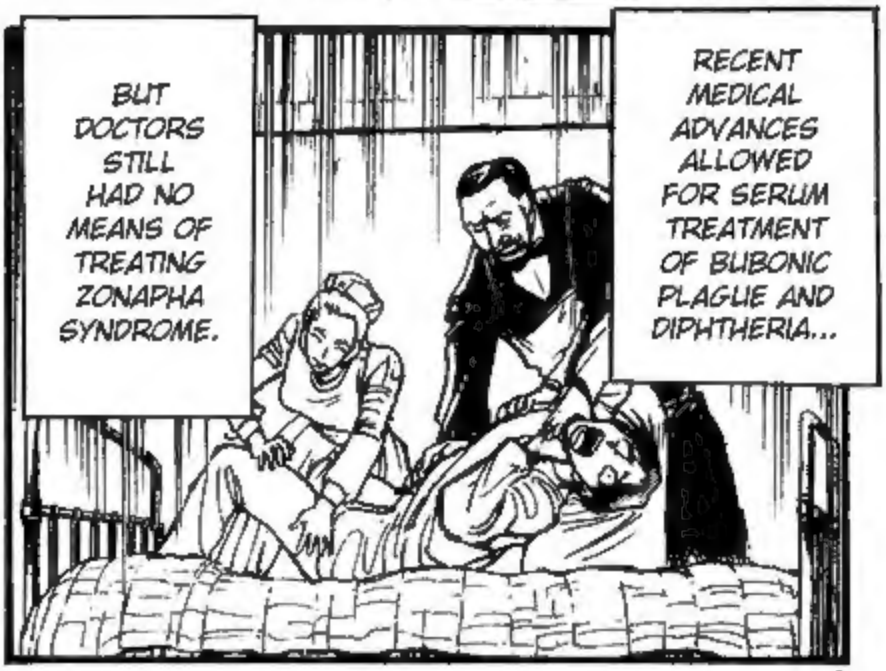


5 SFX: WHEEZING

SFX: GULP

I CAME DOWN WITH ZONAPHA SYNDROME IN 1898, WHEN I WAS 12 YEARS OLD.

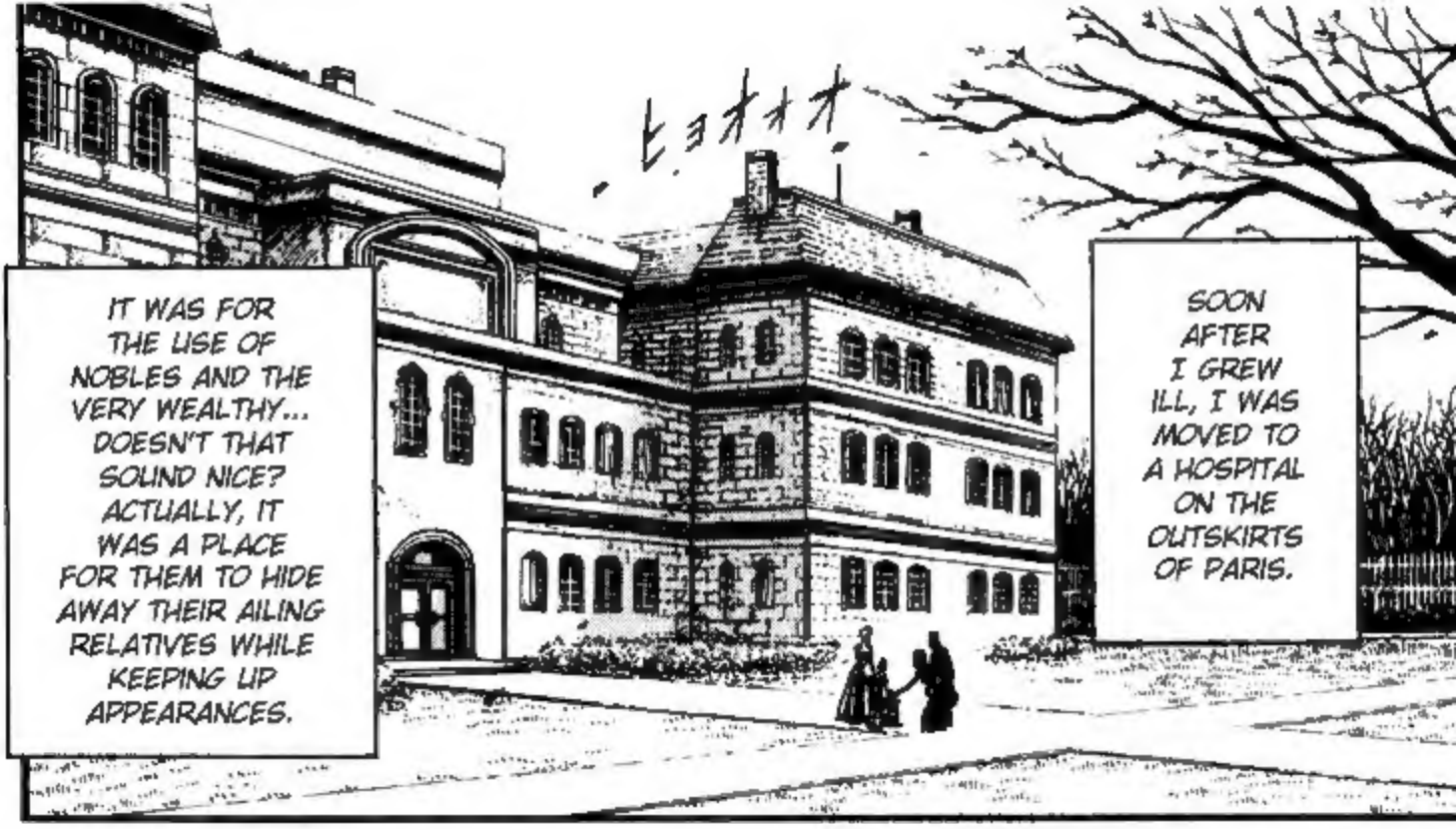
MY PARENTS WERE WEALTHY PARISIANS, PERFECTLY ORDINARY IN EVERY WAY.

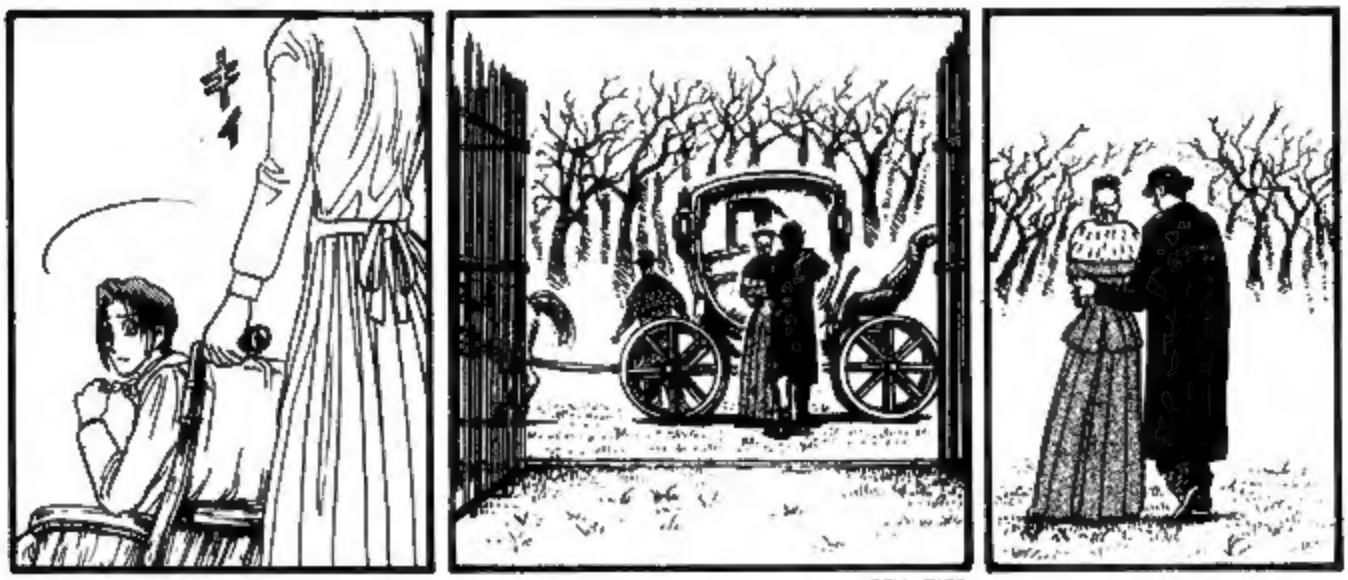

BUT DOCTORS STILL HAD NO MEANS OF TREATING ZONAPHA SYNDROME.
RECENT MEDICAL ADVANCES ALLOWED FOR SERUM TREATMENT OF BUBONIC PLAGUE AND DIPHTHERIA...

YES, MAMAN.

HERE YOU ARE, GUY. EAT THIS CANDY AND BE A GOOD BOY, NOW.

MY MOTHER WAS AN ORDINARY WOMAN. A LIFE OF EASE AND LUXURY WAS THE ONLY ONE SHE KNEW.


ヒョオォオ
IT WAS FOR THE USE OF NOBLES AND THE VERY WEALTHY... DOESN'T THAT SOUND NICE? ACTUALLY, IT WAS A PLACE FOR THEM TO HIDE AWAY THEIR AILING RELATIVES WHILE KEEPING UP APPEARANCES.
SOON AFTER I GREW ILL, I WAS MOVED TO A HOSPITAL ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF PARIS.



SFX: BITE

FOOLISH WOMAN... GIVING CANDY TO A CHILD TO DODGE HER OWN GUILTY CONSCIENCE.

WHAT... WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
BUT OF COURSE, I WAS A FOOL TOO. I BELIEVED WHAT SHE TOLD ME.

I KNOW! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?! I WAS JUST AS LOVABLE BACK THEN AS I AM NOW!
NO WAY...
AFTER THAT, THEY ABANDONED ME.
WHEN I HAD MY SEIZURES IN THAT COLD, CRAMPED HOSPITAL ROOM...
THERE WAS NOTHING THE DOCTORS COULD DO.
MY PARENTS SENT MONEY, BUT THAT WAS ALL. THEY LEFT ME THERE IN THE HOSPITAL.
YOU JUST THOUGHT, "I'M CUTER," DIDN'T YOU?!
...SO THEN WHAT?
VISITORS SOON STOPPED COMING.
I did not!
I UNDERSTOOD THE TRUTH.
AND IN THAT STATE, FOOL THOUGH I WAS...

I HAD BEEN ALONE...
SINCE THE DAY I WAS BORN.

10 YEARS LATER, I FINISHED MY SHIROGANE TRAINING. AND MY FIRST JOB WAS WAITING FOR ME.
WHEN I WAS 14, A SHIROGANE BY THE NAME OF MARIE SHOWED ME HOW TO BECOME A DESTROYER OF DOLLS LIKE HER.

KUROGA VILLAGE.
OCT-OBER 6, 1909 (MEIJI YEAR 42).

チャプ
OH, GOOD HEAVENS, MA'AM! WHAT D'YOU THINK YOU'RE DOIN', AS FAR ALONG AS YOU ARE?
GOOD MORNING, TOMI-SAN.
I JUST THOUGHT I'D WASH THESE OFF.

NO MATTER *HOW* YOU'RE FEELIN', YOU'RE STILL THE WIFE OF THE MAN WHO SAVED OUR VILLAGE!
OUR VILLAGE'D BE THE LAUGHINGSTOCK OF ALL JAPAN IF IT EVER GOT OUT WE MADE SOMEONE LIKE YOU WASH OUR VEGETABLES!
D-DON'T LOWER YOURSELF TO THAT! LEAVE THAT KINDA WORK TO US.
C'MON NOW, STAND UP!
BUT I FEEL JUST FINE TODAY.

ESTATE OF THE VILLAGE HEAD.
THE ONLY THING THIS TINY VILLAGE HAS EVER HAD TO BE PROUD OF WAS OUR PUPPET DANCES THAT STARTED BACK IN THE HEIAN ERA.
BUT SOME TIME AGO, WHEN WE WERE ABOUT TO STARVE TO DEATH IN A DROUGHT ...

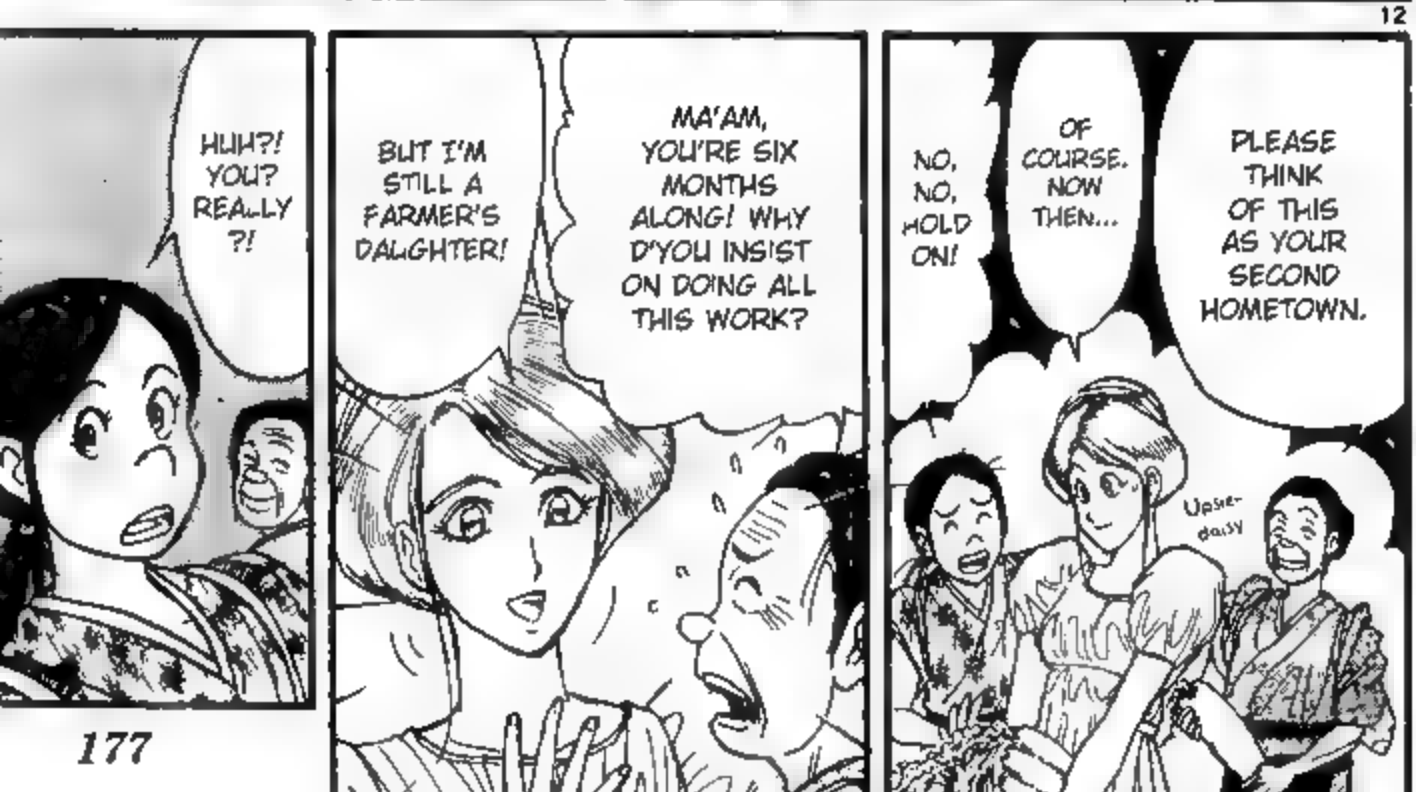
BUT THE PUPPETS THAT KUROGA VILLAGE USES FOR ITS PUPPET DANCES ARE MADE BY MY HUSBAND'S COMPANY. IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT HE SHOULD HELP.

PA'S ALWAYS BRAGGIN' ABOUT THAT.
HE GOT TOGETHER A LOT OF MONEY AND ASSISTANCE, AND SAVED OUR HIDES!
SHOUJI-SAMA TOLD US HE COULDN'T LOOK THE OTHER WAY WHEN ONE OF HIS OLDEST CUSTOMERS WAS IN TROUBLE.
AHAHA!

THAT'S ALL I COULD HAVE WANTED.
IT'S VERY RELAXING HERE.
THE MOST YOU OR SHOUJI-SAMA COULD HAVE HOPED TO GAIN WAS A PLACE TO VISIT AND TAKE IT EASY.
NO, NO, IT WASN'T AT ALL! THERE'S NOTHIN' TO BE GAINED BY HELPIN' OUT A TINY VILLAGE LIKE THIS.

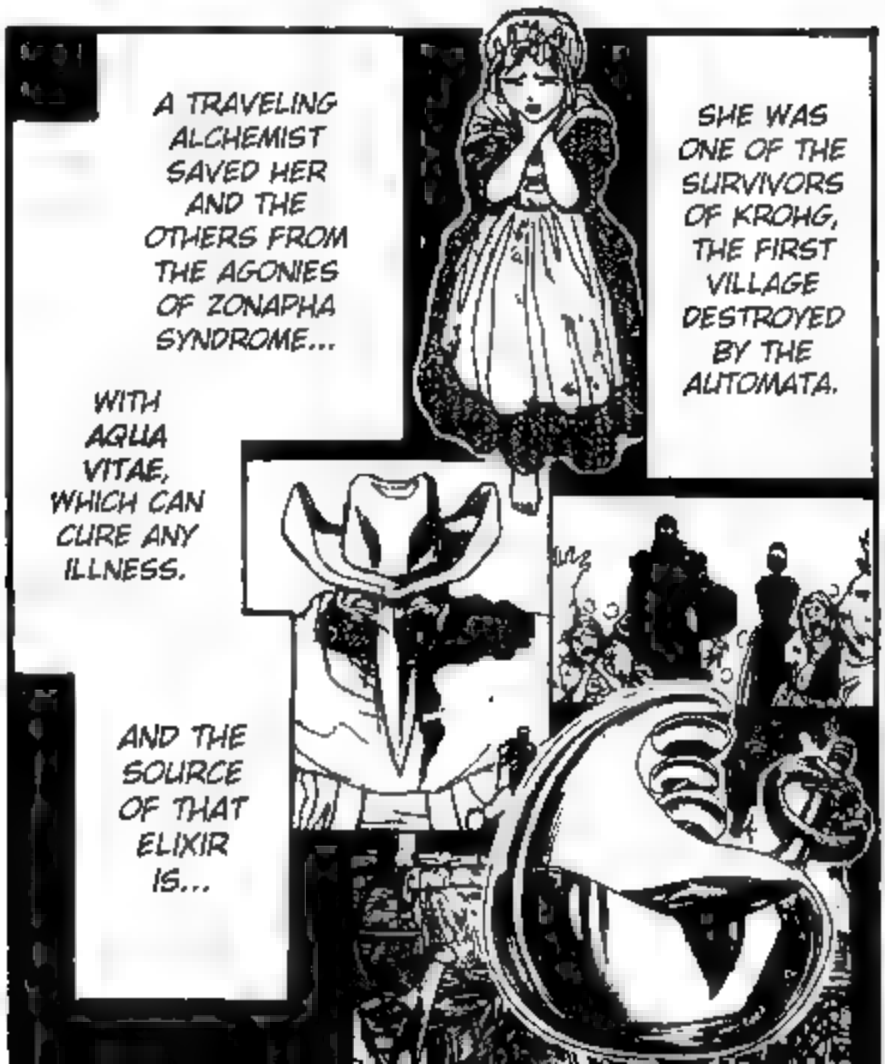
BUT THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY. FOLKS ROUND HERE DON'T EVEN NOTICE ANYMORE.
MUST BE *REAL* HARD BEIN' A RICH MAN'S WIFE AS A FOR-EIGNER.
I CAN EVEN LET MY HAIR AND EYES SHOW.

12


HUH?! YOU? REALLY ?!
BUT I'M STILL A FARMER'S DAUGHTER!
MA'AM, YOU'RE SIX MONTHS ALONG! WHY D'YOU INSIST ON DOING ALL THIS WORK?
NO, NO, HOLD ON!
OF COURSE. NOW THEN...
PLEASE THINK OF THIS AS YOUR SECOND HOMETOWN.
Upse-daisy

YES
A VERY
LONG
TIME
AGO
DO
YOU WANT
TO SEE
GRANDMA?
SO DO I

カーク
カーク


A TRAVELING ALCHEMIST SAVED HER AND THE OTHERS FROM THE AGONIES OF ZONAPHA SYNDROME...
SHE WAS ONE OF THE SURVIVORS OF KROHG, THE FIRST VILLAGE DESTROYED BY THE AUTOMATA.
WITH AQUA VITAE, WHICH CAN CURE ANY ILLNESS.
AND THE SOURCE OF THAT ELIXIR IS...

KUROGA VILLAGE ...
THE LEGENDARY FEMALE SHIRO-GANE, ANGELINA, IS HERE.

THE GOAL OF ALL ALCHEMISTS; THE HIGHEST ACHIEVEMENT IN THE STUDY OF ALCHEMY: THE SOFT STONE.

ANGELINA BECAME THE SOFT STONE'S CONTAINER.
AS THE ONLY CHILD TO SURVIVE...

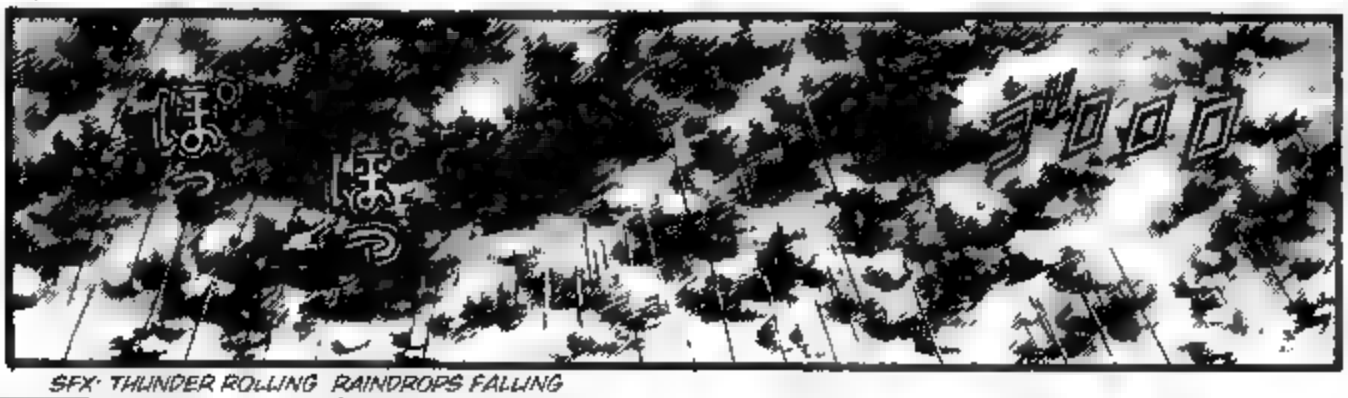
15

BUT 16 YEARS LATER, SHE TOOK FLIGHT.

IT MUST BE EMBEDDED IN A HUMAN BODY! AND A CHILD'S IS THE ONLY KIND THAT WILL NOT REJECT IT.

IT'S A DIFFICULT THING TO HOLD ONTO. IT EVAPORATES WHEN EXPOSED TO THE AIR FOR TOO LONG. THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO STORE THIS STONE.

SFX: BITE



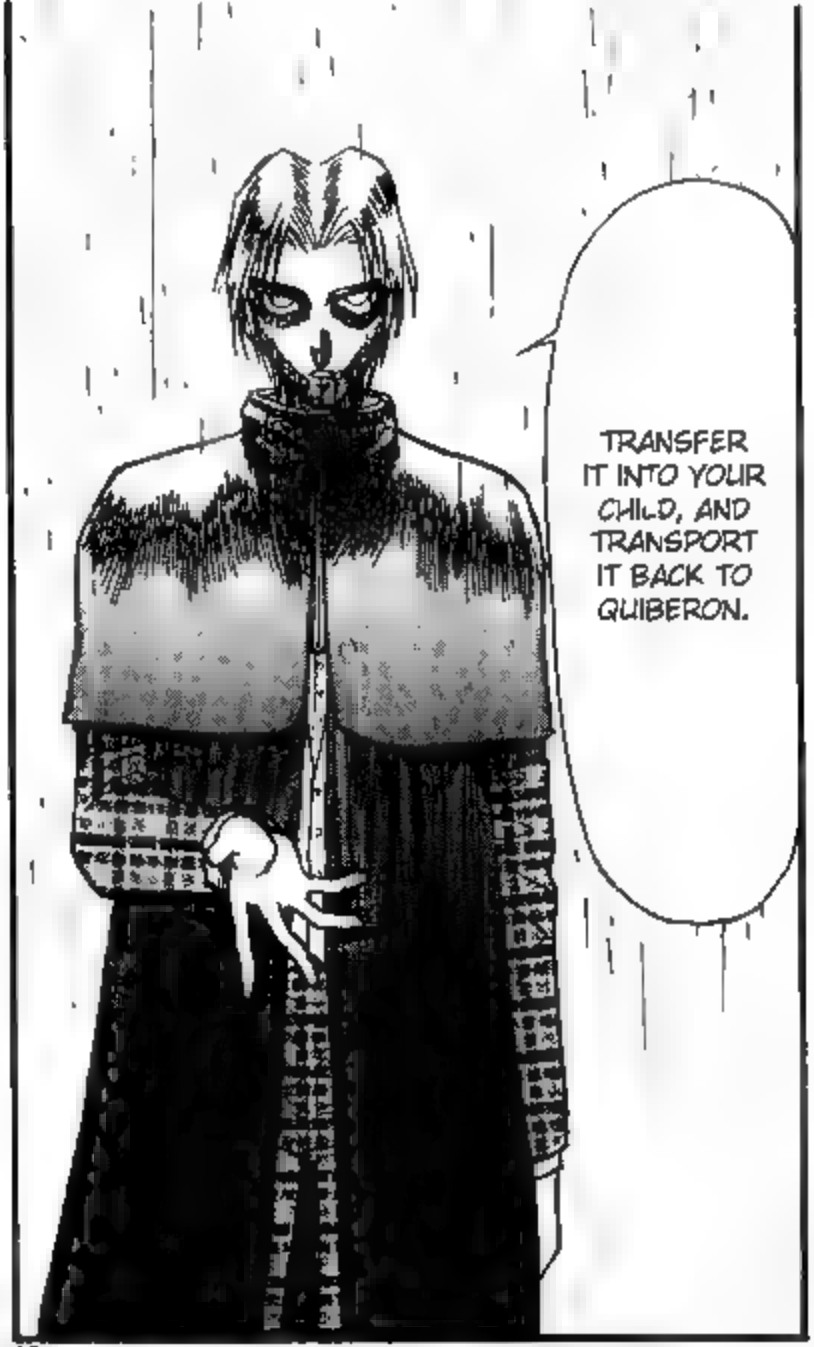
SFX: THUNDER ROLLING RAINDROPS FALLING

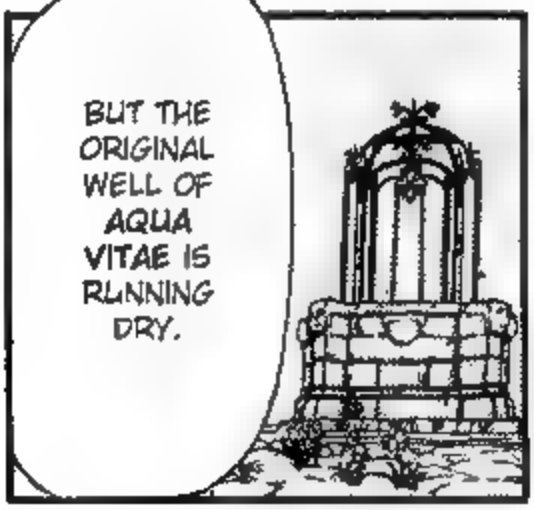
16

ヒロイン
17
SFX: FLASH
AND YOU'RE FRENCH, AREN'T YOU?!
YOU MUST BE A SHIRO-GANE!
ガラ
ゴロゴロゴロ
OH ...!
SFX: THUN-DER

OH, MY... EXCUSE MY RUDE-NESS.
ER...
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I MET A FELLOW COUNTRY-MAN HERE.
FANCY THAT! OH, I'M SO HAPPY!
OH! THEN ARE YOU HERE WITH SOME KIND OF MESSAGE FROM MY MOTHER?
MY NAME IS GUY. I WAS SENT FROM QUIBE-RON.
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE AN ADULT... YOU ACT MORE LIKE A CHILD.
AND... WHAT KIND OF JOB MIGHT THAT BE?
.....
I AM HERE TO CARRY OUT A JOB.
THERE IS NO MESSAGE.

WE NEED AQUA VITAE TO TURN AS MANY ZONAPHA PATIENTS INTO SHIROGANE AS WE POSSIBLY CAN.
THE SHIROGANE ARE CURRENTLY OVER-WHELMED IN NUMBER BY THE AUTOMATA.
THE SOFT STONE IS NECESSARY TO PRODUCE THE AQUA VITAE THAT CREATES NEW SHIROGANE.


TRANSFER IT INTO YOUR CHILD, AND TRANSPORT IT BACK TO QUIBERON.


BUT THE ORIGINAL WELL OF **AQUA VITAE** IS RUNNING DRY.

THEREFORE, I AM TO REMOVE THE SOFT **STONE** FROM YOUR BODY...

SFX: WOBBLE

30

AFTERWARDS, HEADQUARTERS WILL KEEP YOUR CHILD IN FRANCE AS ONE OF THE **SHIROGANE**...
SO THAT THEY CAN REMOVE THE STONE WHENEVER IT IS NEEDED.

YES. YOU ARE TO REMAIN IN JAPAN AND CONTINUE IMPROVING OUR MARIONETTES.

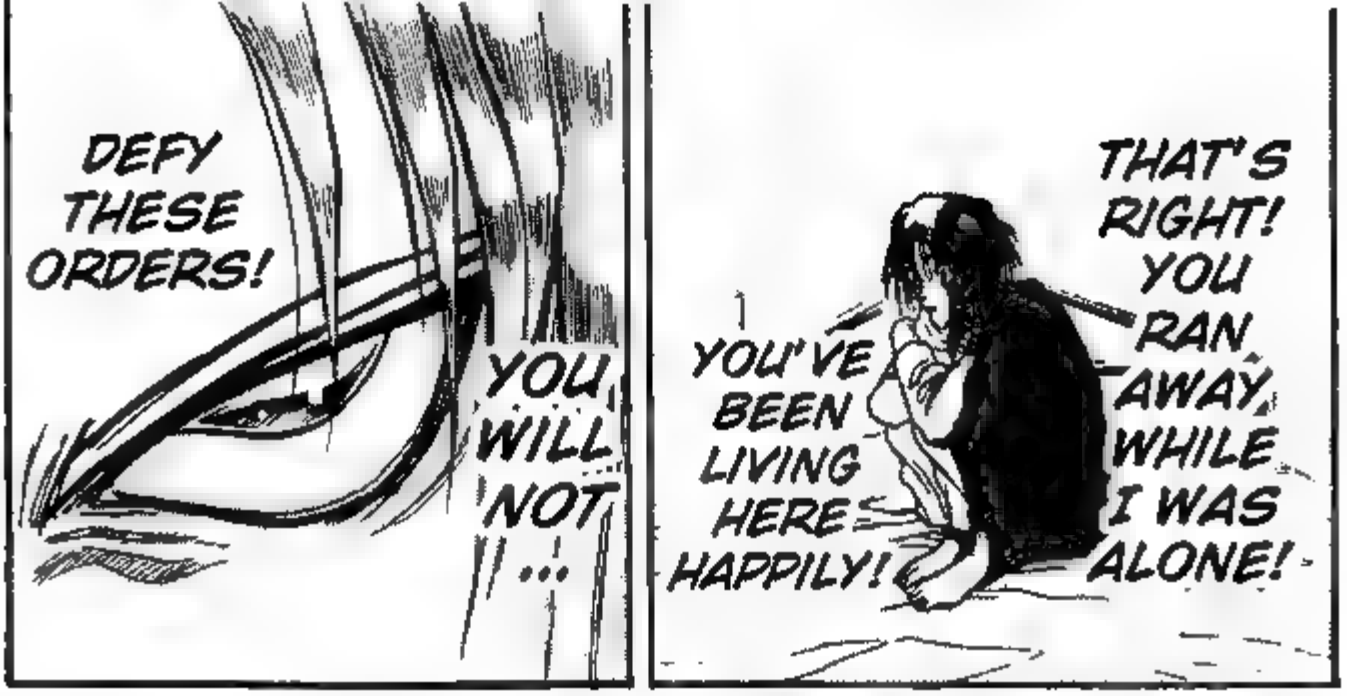
IS THIS AN ORDER FROM MY—FROM MADAME LUCILLE?

THAT YOU WANT TO MAKE MY BABY INTO... INTO A MERE CONTAINER FOR THE SOFT STONE?
YOU'RE TELLING ME...

YOU HAVE A DEBT TO PAY!
AND YOU'VE SPENT ALL THIS TIME IN PEACE AND TRANQUILITY, HAVEN'T YOU?!
YOU ABANDONED YOUR DUTY AS A SHIROGANE AND FLED HERE TO JAPAN.

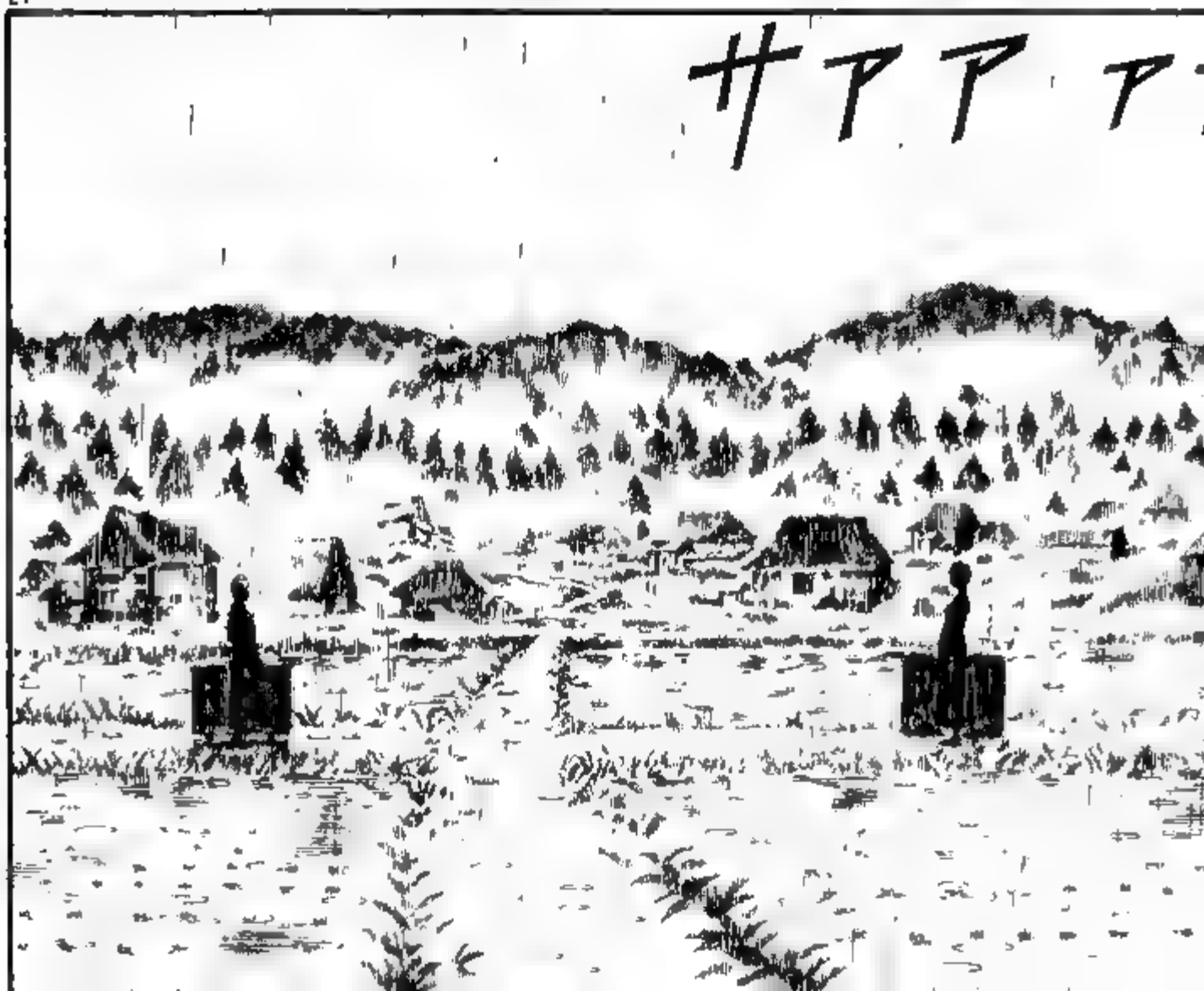
WHAT WAS THAT?
NO...!

DON'T WORRY. I'VE STUDIED ENOUGH MEDICINE TO CARRY OUT THE OPERATION.
THIS WAS DECIDED BY HEADQUARTERS.


DEFY THESE ORDERS!
YOU WILL NOT ...!
YOU'VE BEEN LIVING HERE HAPPILY!
THAT'S RIGHT! YOU RAN AWAY WHILE I WAS ALONE!

I'LL BE THERE SOON.
WAIT IN THE FIELDS BEHIND THE VILLAGE.
VERY WELL.

21



WHAT DO YOU MEAN TO DO, ANGE-LINA?

THEY WERE MERE MACHINES, EXISTING ONLY TO DESTROY DOLLS.
WHETHER SHIROGANE WERE HUMAN, OR WHETHER PERHAPS...
I ALWAYS USED TO WONDER ...

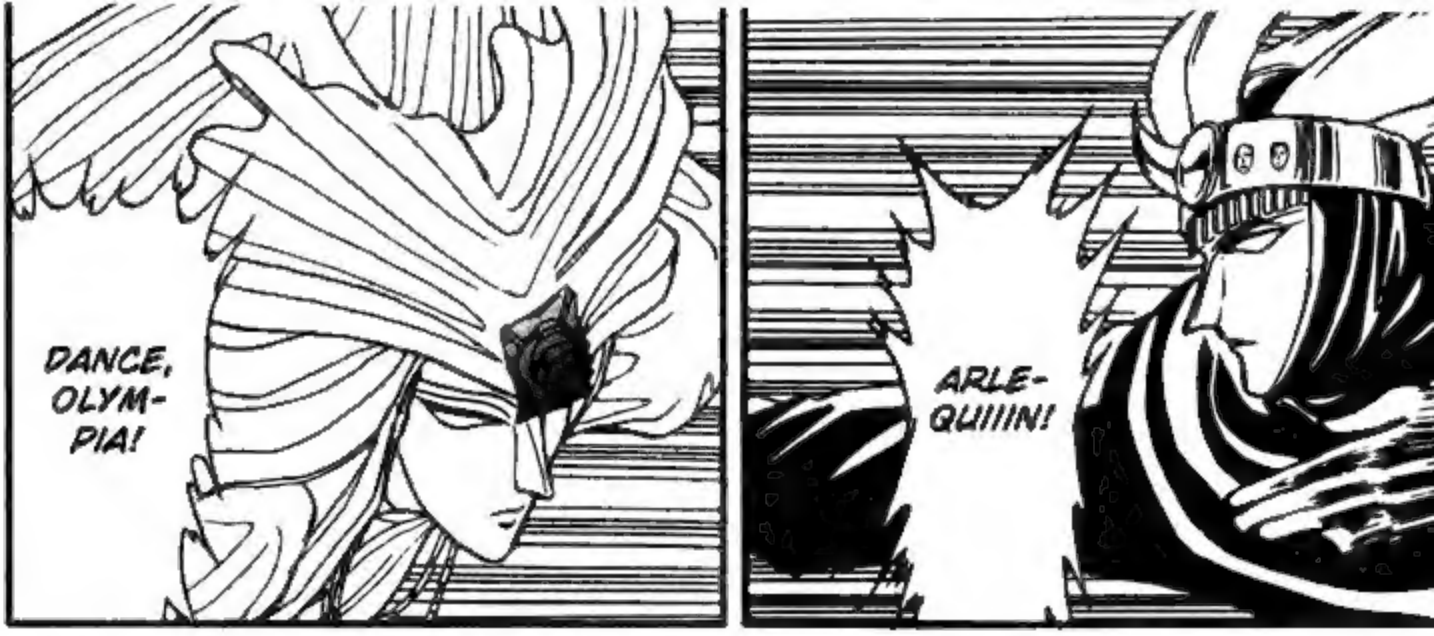
SHI-ROGANE ARE NOT HUMAN.
BUT WHEN I HEARD THOSE ORDERS YOU WERE GIVEN, I KNEW.

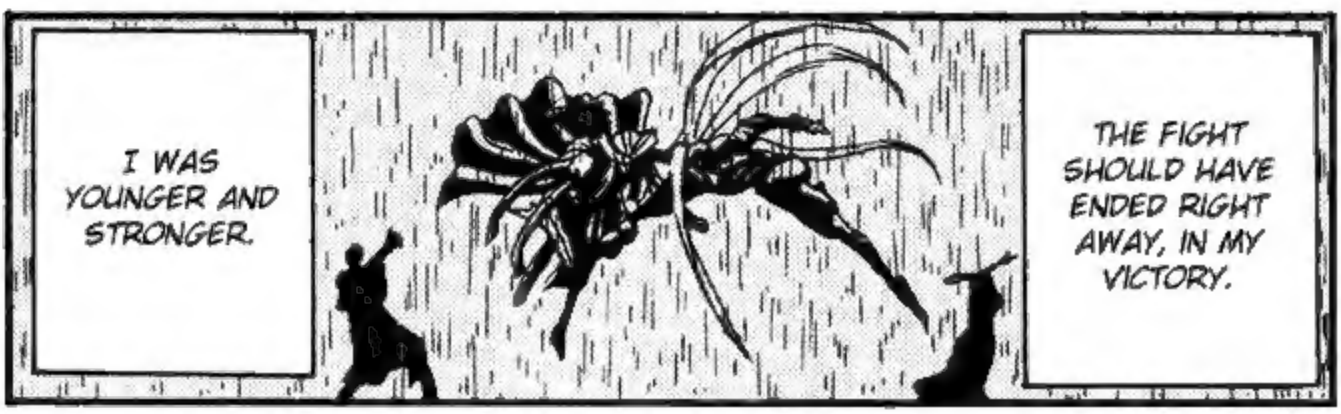
I AM NOT A SHIRO-GANE!
...NO.
HMPH! AND WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU'RE A SHIROGANE TOO!

I AM A MOTHER!

AND JUST HOW IS SOME MATRON WITH A SWOLLEN BELLY ...
GOING TO BE ABLE TO STOP ME?!

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE AN ADULT...
SO IT'S A FIGHT YOU WANT.
THIS WOMAN'S ANOTHER SELFISH FOOL.
I WILL NOT SURRENDER THIS BABY TO A LIFE LIKE MINE!


DANCE, OLYM-PIA!
ARLE-QUIIIN!


I WAS YOUNGER AND STRONGER.
THE FIGHT SHOULD HAVE ENDED RIGHT AWAY, IN MY VICTORY.

THE STRENGTH OF A MOTHER...
BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING I HAD YET TO LEARN ABOUT.

WHO IS FIGHTING TO PROTECT HER CHILD.

からくりサーカス㉔

少年サンデーコミックス

2002年9月15日初版第1刷発行　（検印廃止）

著　者　藤田和日郎
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発行者　片寄聰

印刷所　中央精版印刷株式会社

PRINTED IN JAPAN

「週刊少年サンデー」2002年第18号～第28号掲載作品
連載担当／吉元篤司
単行本編集責任／山本 護
単行本編集／吉元篤司／大橋ゆり子（アイプロダクション）

発行所　(101-8001) 東京都千代田区一ツ橋二の三の一　株式会社 小学館
振替(00180－1－200)
TEL 販売03(3230)5749 編集03(3230)5480

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NOTES:

pg. 11: 屋敷 (yashiki) has been used to describe both Sadayoshi's residence in Karuizawa and the residence of Kuroga Village's head. I've been translating this as "mansion", and both of those places can indeed be described as mansions, but this chapter makes it clear that it should have been "estate" instead.

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Thanks to Judash137 on the mangafox forums for removing the Japanese text, and to the anonymous person who tipped me off to that!

Any group with more experience or skill is welcome to take over at any time or to redo chapters I have already done if they are below the quality that this series deserves.